

INFORMAL ~~SECRET~~ REPORT

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COUNTRY Poland

**CONFIDENTIAL**

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### Introduction

Although the Polish Government and Press vehemently deny that there is any intention or even thought of introducing collective farming, the peasants and the public in general are convinced that its introduction is only a matter of time. For the moment, until the present Communist regime is firmly established, no open propaganda on collective farming is being put out. The Government is well aware of the mentality of the Polish peasant and of his deeply rooted sense of ownership, which would make him oppose most violently any such pressure. Nevertheless, the first steps have already been taken in this direction.

### 2. First Steps

- a. A settlement resembling a collective farm has been set up in East Prussia for ex-soldiers of the Kosciuszko Division and their families with the name "Osada Kosciuszkowska" ("Kosciuszko Settlement"). The Government has given the farmers land, houses, cattle, horses, farming machinery, and seed. The settlement has its own schools, clubs, sports stadium, etc. Farming is based on the collective principle, and mutual help is compulsory, although the farmers are still nominally owners of their pieces of land, cattle, horses, etc. Farming machinery is common property. A local committee decides about all work to be done collectively.
- b. It is understood that similar farms for ex-soldiers are being set up in other districts of the Recovered Territories in the west of Poland. Here ex-soldiers of the Polish forces organized in the Soviet Union during the war, ex-partisans, and members of the AL (People's Army) and PPR are given priority in the granting of land and have the right to apply for more hectares on better conditions than other settlers. Thus in the future the principle of collective farming should be quite easy to enforce in these territories because of the Communist element settled there and the extent of the help given to it by the Government at the expense of other settlers.

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3. Legislation and Government Pressure

a. Recently a bill was passed regarding compulsory assistance of neighbors by farmers. For the time being this bill applies only to those territories incorporated into Poland since the war, where settlement conditions are difficult and farming is a hard task because of the lack of horses, machinery, and tools. But at the same time the bill would appear to be a step toward making farmers used to collectivization of labor and property. Under the terms of this bill, every farmer has the right to demand of his neighbor not only assistance in work but also the use of his horses, tools, etc. The bill will also be a serious handicap to rich farmers, and will deepen the gulf of hatred between the poor and the well-to-do peasants, culminating in the economic ruin of the latter.

b. By a series of cleverly thought out moves, the Government (although desiring to raise the farming standards of the country and to secure the full exploitation of farm land) is step by step making the life of the well-to-do and rich peasants more burdensome and at the same time is gradually accustoming the peasants in general to the idea of collective farming.  
For example:

- (1) At village and settlement meetings, both political and farming problems are now discussed, and Communist agents attempt to sponsor the idea of collective farming, which they claim would be to the benefit of all. The "selfishness" of the rich and the hard life of the poor are stressed, and everything is being done to emphasize local class differences among the peasants.
- (2) Cooperatives run by the Samopomoc Chlopska (Peasants' Self-Help), an organization sponsored and controlled by the Communists, are being established in every village and hamlet to compete with any other cooperative movement. The cooperatives are nominally run by the peasants themselves in their interest. It pays the peasant to sell all his produce to them, as he is offered comparatively high prices, has no trouble with transportation, and receives in exchange articles and tools for which he would otherwise have to pay high prices on the free or black markets. All these cooperatives give privileges to members of the Government parties (PPR, PPE, and SL).
- (3) Farming machinery, timber for building purposes, seed, artificial fertilizers, tools, etc. are also sold and distributed by these cooperatives through their district branches. They also hire farming machinery and provide their members with loans on convenient terms, again giving priority to members of Government Bloc parties. Farm machinery is mostly hired out to groups of peasants or to particular hamlets, so that a sense of collectivization is fostered. The Samopomoc Chlopska has also started to organize local artisan cooperatives, thus introducing a new form of collective activities.
- (4) Peasant members of the Sluzba Polsce are trained in the idea of collective farming. Peasant Youth organizations are similarly regimented and have lectures on the benefits of collective farming. The older peasants are aware of the mental gulf that is thus being gradually created between them and their children but are powerless to prevent it except through their individual influence on the younger generation.
- (5) High taxes, which for the most part have to be paid in kind, are an extremely heavy burden on the peasants, in particular on those who own more land. Taxation rates rise steeply and do not as a rule take into consideration lack of horses, machinery, seed, etc.

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- (6) Peasants, who after the land reform became land owners, are expected to put up farm buildings within a fixed period of time and to make proper use of their land. As in the majority of cases they have not been given cattle, horses, tools, etc., and have had to buy everything themselves, this is often impossible and such peasants are faced with ruin by taxation and current expenses.

#### 4. Attitude of the Peasants

Talks with the peasants and people in close contact with the countryside confirm the belief that the peasants realize what the regime is aiming at. The Polish peasant is cunning and eager for land. Therefore he gladly greeted the land reform and often joins the Communist Party or Peasant Party in the hope of saving himself and his farm in the future. But inwardly he opposes the regime, which gives him no security of tenure and, in his belief, is exploiting him in spite of all the "benefits" and "privileges". He cherishes the hope that things will change before the worst happens and he is ruined and forced into collective farming. He scorns the Communist Party leaders, who have become his masters. This attitude applies only to the central districts of Poland, where peasants have been settled for generations and have a deep, ingrained sense of ownership and of their rights. In the Recovered Territories, the new settler does not feel he is the owner of his land, which he considers as temporary property. Because of the difficulty of farming in these territories and the fear of a new war he has not developed a devotion to the land he owns and tends to believe he will not remain the owner even if he is not forced into collectivization. Many a peasant regrets the good times when he was a farm worker on a country estate and had no serious worries or responsibilities. He may often be heard to say that sooner or later he will be told that he has not proved a good farmer and will be forced into collectivization.

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